

The Citizen Forester

June 2006 No. 104

The MassReLeaf Ministry: Effecting Environmental Justice through Planting Trees

- by Neal Seaborn

The rain was blowing horizontally, being driven by 40 knot winds coming inland off the ocean. We were standing knee deep in water and mud in holes dug to plant trees weighing up to 400 pounds throughout the Riverview Housing development in Quincy, Massachusetts. We were a **MassReLeaf Ministry** project team made up of members of the Quincy Point Congregational Church, Quincy Housing Authority personnel, other city employees, residents of Riverview Housing and friends. We were very visible in our bright yellow rainwear as we moved through the area bailing water from the holes with garbage cans, planting trees in the holes and installing stakes to support the trees.

The obvious question was, “Were we just plain nuts?”. When we started planning our tree planting project, we found part of the answer to that question when we found out that Riverview Housing has 45 buildings that are the residences of 180 low income families (many of whom were homeless within the last year) and very few trees to provide a healthy, natural environment for the residents. The next part of the answer came at the end of the first day of planting when the wind had quieted, the rain had stopped, the residents came out of their housing to admire and touch the trees and the **MassReLeaf Ministry** planting team members didn’t want to leave. The final part of the answer came after the second day of planting when children, riding to school on the local school bus, scurried to one side of the bus and cried, “Look! New Trees!” **MassReLeaf Ministry** projects are making a difference.

The **MassReLeaf Ministry** is a partnership between the **Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (MACUCC)** and the **Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Urban and Community Forestry Program** that helps minister to the physical and mental health, emotional stability and community spirit of people living in deforested urban and blighted communities across the state of Massachusetts.

The **MassReLeaf Ministry** is a response to both multi-religious, theological teachings and the need for human benefits derived from effective urban forestry stewardship. The theological basis of the MassReLeaf Ministry involves stewardship of very precious gifts given to us by God:

- A unique and completely nourishing natural environment to sustain all life as we know it.
- The gift of intelligent human life.
- The gift of all of the creatures and vegetation on earth to use as resources for our own survival.
- The responsibility and ability to nurture all of these precious gifts for the survival of all humankind.

The **MassReLeaf Ministry** offers to local religious organizations, of any denomination or religion, working in collaboration with their respective municipalities and other local groups, unique opportunities to lead real, hands-on tree-planting projects to improve the quality of our shared environment and enhance the lives of thousands of citizens living in population centers

across Massachusetts. This ministry brings the idea of human environmental justice into the neighborhoods and lives of those most in need in our state.

To help accomplish this, the **MassReLeaf Ministry** provides money to pay for trees needed for each planting project. This money is only available to religious organizations and comes from a Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ donation to the state's MassReLeaf Trust Fund. This donation has been matched with funds from the USDA Forest Service. In addition, since most people in religious organizations have never planted large trees, significant project planning and application development support, proper tree planting techniques training and planting technical support are available to local religious organizations for the successful conduct of these projects.

So, the cost to conduct a **MassReLeaf Ministry** project by a local religious organization and associated municipality is the desire and effort to plan and conduct human service projects in their own communities, similar to efforts being done in support of other ministries like Habitat for Humanity, Greater Boston Food Bank, Rosie's Place and many others.

The **MassReLeaf Ministry** was inaugurated in April 2004, after the conduct of a successful pilot project in Somerville during 2003, and the number of community tree planting projects being led by local religious organizations across the state is growing rapidly. Since completion of the pilot project, led by the First Congregational Church in Somerville, eight other **MassReLeaf Ministry** tree-planting projects have been successfully completed, and at least 15 others are in various stages of planning for 2006. The **MassReLeaf Ministry** is truly an exciting, rewarding and direct, hands-on ministry that will benefit tens of thousands of the neediest people in Massachusetts for many years to come.

If you would like to learn more about this exciting new ministry, please contact one of the **MassReLeaf Ministry** representatives shown below who will work with you to explore the possibility of your participating in a MassReLeaf Ministry project. Once you have decided to participate in a MassReLeaf Ministry project, you can get started by:

- Developing a Core Group of 2 - 3 people passionate about environmental ministry in your organization.
- Work with the **MassReLeaf Ministry** representative to set a date for an introductory workshop for the Core Group.
- Work with the **MassReLeaf Ministry** representative to establish appropriate connections between your religious organization, municipality and/or other local organizations.
- The **MassReLeaf Ministry** representative will work with you, the religious organization and local municipal people to develop a tree planting project plan and grant application compatible with the local municipality strategic tree planting plan.

MassReLeaf Ministry representatives for you to contact are:

MACUCC – Reverend Paul Nickerson (508-875-5233 x 236) or nickersonp@macucc.org

DCR - Eric Seaborn (617-626-1468) or eric.seaborn@state.ma.us

MACUCC Technical Support - Neal Seaborn (781-237-2152) or eseaborn@comcast.net

Metro Boston Area-Kerrie Harthan (617-964-1100 x208) or kbharthan@yahoo.com

Northeast Area – Craig Bentley (617-462-2446) or cebentley@verizon.net

Southeast Area - Mary Ann Wordell (508-679-8887) or macwrose@netscape.com

Central Area – Neal Seaborn (781-237-2152) or eseaborn@comcast.net

Western Area – Angie Fowler (413-549-1637) or waveylady754@msn.com

MassReLeaf Ministry funding grant application forms are available now for you to participate in a Fall 2006 or Spring 2007 tree-planting project. These grant application forms can be downloaded by clicking on the following link: <http://www.macucc.org/emj/MassReLeafApplications.htm> or they can be obtained from the above **MassReLeaf Ministry** Area representatives.

- The author of this article is the Director of the MassReLeaf Ministry for the MACUCC, is a recipient of the "Outstanding Citizen Forester" award for 2004 and is the father of the Coordinator of the DCR's Urban and Community Forestry Program – the apple does not fall far from the tree!

Picks and Shovels

What a Beautiful Day! – Boston Arbor Day 2006 Redux

On Arbor Day, April 28th, a highly motivated group of about 40 people gathered at the Holland School in Dorchester to celebrate the holiday, build community and plant trees. On hand for the event were representatives of the National Arbor Day Foundation and the Home Depot Foundation, both organizations being sponsors of the project. Lending hands to get the trees in the ground were volunteers and staff from local Home Depot stores, Eagle Eye Institute, Youth Build USA, UMass Boston 4H Urban Stewards, USDA Forest Service, Urban Ecology Institute, City of Cambridge Parks, Dorchester Wellness, the Boston Parks Department and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The event was organized by the **Boston Urban Forest Coalition** (www.bostonforest.org – please be patient website under construction) and served as the inaugural event for this exciting new coalition. **Hint: keep your eyes on this group – good things are coming soon!** At the end of the day, backs were tired and feet were sore, but spirits were high and planted that day had been 60 new trees in the yard of this newly renovated, urban school. Also planted that day were the seeds of community that, with time and care, will surely grow into something grand.

“Trees are Terrific!”

Congratulations to Zoe Pestana, 5th grade student at the Atlantis Charter School in Fall River who is the winner of the 2006 state wide Arbor Day Poster Contest. Zoe’s poster is a beautiful depiction of the seasonal changes to trees that occur here in New England, and in particular to one imaginary, much loved tree. Great job Zoe!

Zoe’s poster will be entered into the national contest that is conducted by the National Arbor Day Foundation. Congratulations are also in order to the other finalists in the contest including; Vivian Lin (2nd place) of the Memorial Spaulding School in Newton, Shannen Pavao (3rd place) of the Westport Middle School in Westport, Emily Zinsli (Honorable Mention) of the Clinton Middle School in Clinton, Nicole Houlihan (Honorable Mention) of the Beckett Washington School in Becket, Katie Morrissey (Honorable Mention) of the Thorndyke Road School in Worcester and Emily Muller (Honorable Mention) of the Fisher Elementary School in Walpole. And finally, congratulations to all of the contestants in this year’s contest, whose posters were selected as school winners from more than 2000 posters created in 25 schools across the state.

Once again, these talented young artists made it very difficult for the judges to select finalists.

Calling All Tree Wardens

In the near future, Tree Wardens and Tree Committees will receive a brief questionnaire in the mail for an important research project being conducted by the *University of Massachusetts* in partnership with The *Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)*. Your opinion and feedback is an important part of helping DCR tailor its technical assistance, education and funding programs to better meet your community's needs in managing urban & community forestry programs. All Massachusetts Tree Wardens are being contacted. Please give this questionnaire your attention as soon as you receive it. It should only take 12 – 15 minutes of your time to complete. Except for your information relative to four performance measures against which we at the state are being measured, all data will be reported in aggregate form. *None of your specific responses and more sensitive data will ever be made public!* Our goal is to help **Massachusetts become Number One** in terms of urban & community forestry performance and this survey is a key element of our efforts to reach that goal.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Eric Seaborn at 617-626-1468 or at eric.seaborn@state.ma.us

Growing Greener

The city of Chelsea is "growing greener" thanks to a first time \$10,000 line item for tree maintenance and a new Christmas tree recycling program. Christmas trees are picked up during a two week period by a contractor and brought to a composting facility. The combination of the line item and recycling program earned Chelsea, a second year Tree City USA, the honor of a Tree City Growth Award. Tree City's with an increase in their budget are eligible for a Tree City Growth Award if new programming during the year enables them to attain at least 10 Growth Award points - activities are eligible under several categories. We congratulate Chelsea, Lawrence, Springfield, Sturbridge, Wellesley, and Worcester for attaining Tree City Growth Award status for 2005!

Growing on Trees

New England Grassroots Environment Fund Accepting Applications for Boston

Grants Initiative: The purpose of the New England Grassroots Environment Fund Boston Grants Initiative is to increase engagement and citizen participation in environmental health, environmental justice, and greenspace issues in the greater Boston area. The initiative's priority objectives are solving environmental problems and fostering stewardship, increasing community involvement, and building networks among Boston citizens. To meet these objectives, the initiative interprets the word "environment" broadly and will support a wide range of activities.

Organizations interested in applying should contact NEGEF staff before submitting a grant proposal. Grant awards will range from \$500 to \$10,000 each. Visit the NEGEF Web site for complete program guidelines, application instructions, and information on other funding programs. <http://www.grassrootsfund.org/boston/guide.html>

What's Eating Gilbert's Grapes (or actually, Gilbert's Trees)?

Many of you may have noticed that your trees are being nearly defoliated and that there seems to be a bumper crop of "inch worms" out there right now. Well, coincidence does not necessarily mean cause and effect, but in this case, it does. Massachusetts is experiencing an outbreak of defoliating caterpillars including Gypsy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*) in the southeast, Forest Tent Caterpillars (*Malacosoma disstria* Hubner) in western and southeastern areas and the Winter Moth (*Operophtera brumata*) in the east. For more information on these critters and what you should and should not do about them, please contact Charlie Burnham, DCR Forest Health Program Director at 413-256-1601 or Charles.Burnham@state.ma.us. You can also visit the UMass Extension website at http://www.umassgreeninfo.org/fact_sheets/index.html for helpful fact sheets. The UMass Winter Moth fact sheet can be found at http://www.umassgreeninfo.org/fact_sheets/defoliators/wm_overview_06.pdf

CityGreen Analysis Available to Select Massachusetts Communities

If you are looking for some empirical data and bottom line numbers to quantify the benefits provided to your community by the urban forest, it's a great time to be thinking about this subject. The USDA Forest Service and other research groups are making available several tools that will give you as a community tree and forest manager the data you are seeking. In the near future, we will be providing information on the I-Tree suite of tools developed by the Forest Service and we will work with you to complete analyses of your forest resource. Right now, the national non-profit American Forests has the CityGreen tool available and has completed analyses of more than 1000 communities across the nation, several of them here in Massachusetts. To see if your community has been analyzed and to read the report, please visit <http://ergwms.er.usgs.gov/citygreen.html>. If you are in a community for which a report has been prepared, we urge you to consider using this data as the basis of a more comprehensive community forest management plan and as a valuable source of information as you advocate for your forest resources.

On The Horizon

Views of the Urban Forest, Lecture Series: The Lexington Tree Committee is sponsoring a series of lectures on urban and community forest issues. All events are free, made possible through a grant from DCR and will be at the Lexington Carey Library at 7:30 p.m. Contact John Frey at jwfrey2@aol.com. Series includes:

- September 13, 2006: Jad Daley Campaign Director for the Northern Forest Alliance will speak on *Forests on the Edge – Linking Northeastern Wildlands and the Urban Forest* – September 13, 2006.
- October 18, 2006: David Pinsonneault Lexington's Superintendent of Public Grounds and Tree Warden will speak on *Implementing a Tree Management Program in Lexington*.

Risk Tree Assessment, Train the Trainer Workshop, June 6-7, 2006, Fairlee, Vermont. Contact John Parry at jparry@fs.fed.us for details.

Empire State Green Industry Show November 14-16, 2006, Rochester Riverside Convention Center, Rochester, NY. This is a combined education conference and trade show of the New York State Arborists, ISA Chapter Inc.; New York State Turfgrass Association; New York State Nursery/Landscape Association; and New York State Flower Industries. For details, contact Jill Cyr at 518-783-1229, 800-873-8873, jill@nysta.org, or www.nysta.org.

Future Pathways to Conservation

The USDA Forest Service and several partners are seeking to Link Young People in Boston to Careers in Conservation. With this in mind, the second annual Future Pathways event will be held:

WHEN: June 16, 2006
WHERE: Franklin Park (White Stadium)
8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Future Pathways to Conservation is a program that introduces urban youth in the Boston area to careers in natural resource management. The program works through a collaborative partnership involving community-based organizations in the Boston area with federal, state and city land management agencies. A centerpiece of Future Pathways is a careers workshop that introduces high school students to conservation careers by having them work hand-in-hand with natural resources professionals in small, activity oriented settings. This is the second year of the event and the anticipated youth attendance is approximately 150 high school age students from the City of Boston school system. The event will take place, rain or shine, in the outdoor setting of Franklin Park in Boston.

For more information about the event, please contact Tonika Goins-Heath at (617) 548 – 2546 or tonikagoins@fs.fed.us

Species Spotlight



Metasequoia glyptostroboides, Dawn Redwood

Originally brought to the United States from China by Boston's Arnold Arboretum in the 1940's, this fast growing deciduous conifer can reach heights of 75-100 feet. The dawn redwood has a uniform conical habit with a fine airy texture in the leaf. It has attractive reddish-brown bark, and an interesting buttress trunk that can take on a fluted or braided character.

Interesting fact: The Dawn Redwood was thought to be extinct and was known only from fossils from various parts of the globe before being discovered still living in one valley in China. This is truly an ancient tree. I find that amazing – but maybe it's just me - Eric

Advantages and Limitations: Although hardy to zone 4, this tree is susceptible to early fall frosts. It requires full sun and, as a large scale tree, plenty of growing space to develop. Dawn redwood does poorly on dry or high pH sites, and can be susceptible to Japanese beetles. Although it is used as a street tree, it may be more appropriate for setback plantings, park areas, campuses, and screening. It should **never** be planted in close proximity to overhead utilities.

For more information visit <http://www.hort.uconn.edu/Plants/m/metgly/metgly1.html>.

The Citizen Forester is made possible through a grant from the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Bureau of Forestry.

You are receiving this email because you have requested to receive the Citizen Forester. If this is an error or you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please email eric.seaborn@state.ma.us.

Subscribe? Unsubscribe? Please email eric.seaborn@state.ma.us.

If you have a topic or addition to the Citizen Forester newsletter, please let us know.

If you have questions about Urban and Community Forestry, contact:

Eric Seaborn, Coordinator (eric.seaborn@state.ma.us)

Jane Calvin, Community Forester, Eastern Mass
(urbanforestry@prospeed.net)



**Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry
Department of Conservation and Recreation**

251 Causeway Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Mitt Romney, Governor

Kerry Healey, Lieutenant Governor

Stephen Pritchard, Secretary, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

Stephen H. Burrington, Commissioner, Department of Conservation and Recreation

Jim DiMaio, Chief, Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry